

Preface

Titus Flavius Clemens (ca. 150-215) is well known for laying a theoretical foundation for both the catechetical and christological schools of second-century Christian Alexandria. He had several good motives in undertaking a project of such scope. Though the biographical data for Clement's life is scarce, several sources suggest that his family came from Western imperial circles. He was able to obtain an excellent education from different teachers during his frequent journeys to Magna Graecia, the Near East, and Palestine. Perhaps this factor was of decisive significance for his mature philosophical concepts, which have been acknowledged by scholars of late antiquity and early Christianity as being critical and fundamental for understanding the second-century Christian educational, theological and ecclesiastical establishments. When he entered the Christian community in Alexandria, a city that at that time was still a cultural capital of the Mediterranean basin, Clement knew pagan religious and philosophical schools intimately. In open dialogue, he thoroughly united them with an authentically Christian message. For his inclusiveness of Greek philosophy and *paideia*, which has been contrasted with Tertullian's exclusivity of Christian faith,¹ Clement has received much attention in recent studies. It has been demonstrated that, on the one hand, Clement helped to mold the mindset of the late antiquity; on the other hand, he contributed to the process of shaping the well-known paradigm of Alexandrian Christianity. We can

¹ See Werner Jaeger's brief but programmatic book *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Cambridge; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 33 and 122, note 27 (for Tertullian) and 45, 61-62 (for Clement), in which the author explicitly characterizes Tertullian's sense of superiority of Christian faith that rejects the possibility of construing Christianity as a new philosophy and indirectly compares it to Clement's integral relation of philosophy to Christian faith perceiving Christianity as precisely the new meta-philosophy. See also Philip Rousseau, *The Early Christian Centuries* (London: Longman, 2002), p. 114, 145-147.

pinpoint several discernable scholarly approaches to Clement's intellectual legacy, which will be discussed in further detail: historical, philosophical, theological, philological, and cultural-historical. This scholarship, however specific and exhaustive in various academic realms, still has not conducted a thorough examination of Clement's christology.

The main purpose of the dissertation is to explore Clement's christology, which comprehensively combined Christian theology with Hellenic philosophy and poetry, traditional Jewish theology and hermeneutics, and Gnostic cosmology. What is meant by christology will be discussed more fully later, although it must suffice to say now that it is used not in the terms of the dogmatic theology of the fourth century and afterwards. Clement's christology can be seen rather as the key subject of Christian tradition about the Incarnation of the *logos* and his role in the divine economy of salvation. Clement boldly drew upon those viewpoints that tradition ultimately judged unacceptable because they diminished the Jewish and early Christian emphasis upon the radical involvement of God "as other" into human history, such as a docetic Gnostic divine emissary or a Platonic manifestation of divine nature that was both transcendent and part of the cosmos. But Clement did not adopt the viewpoints he entertained. Rather, he entered into dialogue with those doctrines to help mold and formulate his own critical and inclusive approach to Christianity.

To understand Clement's christology, it is necessary to survey his entire written legacy. Five of Clement's ten known writings have survived, and they convey Clement's vision of a three-level *paideia*, inculcating Christianity as a kind of curriculum. John Ferguson calls these three levels: a) a formation of character elaborated in *Paidagogos*,

b) of action in *Protreptikos*, and c) of emotion in his perhaps unwritten *Didaskalos* (the reminiscences of this treatise can be found in Clement's *Stromateis*).² In conformity with the stages, Christ's main roles are persuasive (*protreptikos*) and instructive. The latter role has also two levels, namely, elementary (*paidagogos*) and advanced (*didaskalos*). Additionally, as the High Priest, Christ is, according to Clement, the model for true Christian Gnostic (*gnostikos*). This trifold catechetical curriculum became indispensable for ensuing Christian practical and theoretical theology and was echoed in the thought of such theologians as Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius Ponticus, Dionysius the Areopagite, and Maximus the Confessor. However, modern theological scholarship has paid insufficient attention to the fact that Jesus Christ is in Clement's christology the cornerstone of philosophy and theology, as well as the unifying dynamic of human experience and worldview. According to Clement, Christ is the key to understanding of human identity and the purpose of life and the sole channel to the knowledge of God.

² See the introduction to his translation of Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis: Book 1-3*. The Fathers of the Church 85 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), pp. 11-12; cf. also a thorough analysis of this issue in Andre Méhat, *Études sur les "Stromates" de Clément d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966), pp. 15-40.